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Indian Timbers.

The Hill Forests of Western India.

BY

HERBERT MILLS BIRDWOOD, C.S.I., L.L.D., M.A.

Illustrated by eleven Page Plates in Colours.

RAM SINGH DEL. MAYO SCHOOL OF ART LAHORE.

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of India, third on the list of exports of forest produce as regards valuation, and second as regards quantity; the Jambul tree (*Eugenia Jambolona*), already referred to, which may be regarded as the most characteristic tree of both Matheran and Mahableshwar, impressing, as it does most effectually, its grace of form and beauty of colour on all the landscape and shading the ground everywhere with a cool canopy of sweet-scented leaves ; another tree, also of the Myrtle order (*Careya arborea*), which has been already referred to ; the Ironwood (*Memecylon edule*), which has also been referred to and is also a characteristic tree of both hills, with its dark shining leaves like the leaves of the Camellia ; the Benteak tree (*Lagerstroemia parviflora*), which yields a wood of excellent grain for the cabinet-maker ; the Kânta Kumbal (*Sideroxylon tomentosum*), a tough, hard-grained tree, as its name implies ; the *Bassia latifolia* or Mowrah tree, from which Mowrah liquor is made in other parts of India ; and yet a third tree of the Sapodilla order, the Bokul (*Mimusops Elengi*), with dark green foliage and honey-scented flowers ; the *Diospyros assimilis*, one of the Indian ebonies ; the Kaola (*Symplocos Beddomei*), with blossoms scented like the hawthorn and blue berries ; the wild Olive (*Olea dioica*) ; the Wâras (*Heterophragma Roxburghii*), a tall tree of the Bignonia or Trumpet-Flower Order, with grey pinnate leaves and clusters of showy white bell-shaped flowers ; the Teak tree (*Tectona grandis*), the most important of all the forest trees ; the Shewan (*Gmelina arborea*), the pale yellow close-grained wood of which is used for planking, furniture, the panels of doors, etc. ; the wild Nutmeg (*Myristica attenuata*) ; and fifteen species of the Laurel order, all notable and some of them very beautiful trees, the two most notable being the *Litsæa Stocksii* already referred to, a shapely laurel rising to a height of twenty feet or more, and generally assuming a pyramidal tapering form, and displaying whorls of pale bluish leaves—a very characteristic tree of both hills—and a species of Cinnamon (*Cinnamonum Tamala*), of which I have found only four specimens, all at Matheran—a striking and handsome tree, though of no great size, with tufts, when first bursting into leaf, of small pink transparent leaves, which afterwards lengthen and become pointed at both ends, and have marked ribs or nerves, and are dark and shining above, and when dried turn to a rich brown and yield a spicy scent when crushed. These, with several species of trees of the Spurgewort order (*Euphorbiaceæ*), which is well represented on both hills, and includes the *Macaranga Roxburghii* already referred to, and readily recognised by its large ovate and peltate leaves, and the Hasâna (*Bridelia retusa*), a good timber tree ; and of the genus Ficus, which includes the well-known Banyan tree, the sacred Pipal, the Sycamore tree of the Bible, and other Figs not so well known ; the stately and fine-foliaged Jack tree (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), with its enormous fruit, allied to the Figs ; the Willow (*Salix tetrasperma*), and the Fish tail palm (*Caryota urens*)—the only palm included in my catalogue—make up a fairly full list of the more conspicuous of the forest trees on the two hills.

I wish I could convey to you something more than a dim conception of the beauty and perennial charm of these Indian woods. But that is beyond my power. It will be enough for me, and I shall be quite satisfied, if, by my narrative, imperfect and meagre though it be, I shall have helped you in any degree to appreciate the value of the great work done by those who have preserved and improved the forest tracts of British India to the lasting benefit of the State and the people.

H. M. B.

In proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer for his highly interesting and instructive paper, the Chairman (General Michael) said that, as Mr. Birdwood had paid him the compliment of alluding to him personally in connection with the early efforts of the Madras Government to introduce a workable system of forest conservancy into India, he might perhaps add a few words to what Mr. Birdwood had said. There are few men, he said, now left alive among the Indian services who knew or could remember—as he did—what the state of affairs was, as regards forests, half a century ago, when the Madras Government made the effort spoken of. In those days hundreds of acres of primeval forests used to be ruthlessly cut down and burned by the inhabitants for the sake of a few scanty crops of millet. Timber merchants used to be allowed to go into richly-wooded tracts and work their wicked will. No thought seemed to be taken of the hereafter, but in 1848 an experimental establishment was organised for the protection and the economical working of one of the most valuable tracts of forest in the far south of the Madras Presidency. Mr. Birdwood had stated that, after seven years of somewhat uphill work a pronounced success, both financial and preservative, was achieved, and the ball was thus set rolling. Success was the one thing needed to cause the Court of Directors of the East India Company to take the matter up warmly—conservancy measures and establishments spread rapidly all through India—and with what result ? In 1848 the forests of India were fast being ruined by neglect and reckless waste, and the revenue was practically *nil*. By 1898 all existing forests were not only saved and put under good care, but he (the Chairman) was afraid to say how many thousands of acres or square miles had been planted or reafforested, and the net annual revenue stood at £1,000,000 sterling or more. By that time also most of our colonies and dependencies, and

even the United States, had taken a leaf out of India's book, and had established forest conservancy departments. Of course, this gigantic success is due to the measure having reached Imperial proportions. Madras can only take credit for a share of it, but she is justly entitled to look back with satisfaction to her pioneering scheme having been started on a sound basis, and to its having thus proved a success. Too much stress cannot be laid on the value of two principles on which the work was begun—firstly, that full and liberal recognition and respect for the ancient communal rights of the people should always be maintained; and secondly, that, in carrying out forest conservancy, preservation of the natural resources should be the first consideration, and the acquisition of revenue a secondary one. The ancient rights of the people over forest land is a matter with which it is vitally necessary to deal in a liberal spirit. The early records of the India Office show that on this rock both Bombay and Tenasserim split when conservancy was first attempted there. This same rock has frequently cropped up since, as all forest officers know well—and a most dangerous one it is, because if once the local people think they have been badly or illiberally treated they have a thousand and one methods of showing hostility to the Department, and, maybe, to the Government itself. It was highly satisfactory to see that Lord Roberts, in the political part of his autobiography, took a clear-sighted view of this very question, and sounded a note of warning against undue over-riding of ancient forest rights, as a probable fertile source of discontent in India. He thanked Mr. Birdwood warmly on behalf of the meeting.

DESCRIPTIONS OF PLATES 21, 28 and 33.

21.—*Eugenia jambolana.* Black Plum, Jaman. Evergreen. Wood reddish-grey, moderately hard, darker near centre. Weight 48 lbs. per cubic foot. Used for native building purposes, agricultural implements, rice-mortars, carts, and for well work, as it resists action of water. Gives a good fuel. One of the trees on which the tásar silkworm is fed. GAMBLE.

28.—*Diospyros Kurzii.* Andamanese Marble Wood. Evergreen. Wood hard, but liable to shrink and warp, useful for cabinet work, sticks, frames and carriages. Should be of great value in European market, if known and supplied. GAMBLE.

33.—*Dipterocarpus Hasseltii.* (Andaman Gurjan) (=D. turbinatus.) The Gurjan Oil-tree. A lofty evergreen, 150 to 200 ft. high. Sapwood white, heartwood red-brown. Its wood-oil is largely collected and exported, and is also used for painting houses and ships. The timber is used for house-building, canoes and packing-cases, but is soon destroyed by white ants and therefore not much in estimation. GAMBLE.

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66.—*Gmelina arborea, Linn.* Kullé or Sivané. A deciduous tree found throughout India, Burma and the Andaman Islands. Wood glossy, close and even-grained, soft, light and strong, durable, does not shrink, warp or crack. Weight 30 to 40 lbs. per cubic foot. Easily worked, readily takes paint or varnish; very durable under water. Highly esteemed for planking, furniture, domestic utensils, door panels, carriages and palanquins, well-work, boats, toys, packing-cases, picture-frames, organ pipes, sounding-boards and other such work where shrinkage is to be avoided. Used in Burma for carving images, clogs and canoes. It would probably be a valuable wood for tea-boxes. F. B. Manson.

67.—*Gmelina arborea*, Linn.

68.—*Aegle Marmelos.* Bel Fruit. A small tree with thorny branches. Not often cut because valued for its fruit. Wood used for pestles of oil and sugar mills, carts & agricultural implements. GAMBLE.

69.—*Mitragyna Parvifolia.* Kaddam or Kein. (=Stephegyne parvifolia). A large deciduous tree, trunk short, often irregularly shaped & buttressed. Bark smooth. Common in both peninsulas, often gregarious, particularly in moist places. Wood used for making combs. BRANDIS.

70.—*Adina cordifolia.* Hardu or Karam. Large deciduous tree. Wood moderately hard. Wt. 45 lbs. per cub. ft. Used for combs, turnery, furniture, agricultural implements, cigar boxes. Liable to warp & crack. GAMBLE.

71.—*Podocarpus neriifolia.* A large evergreen. Wood used for carpentry, oars, spars, masts, tea-boxes. Weight 42 lbs. per cubic foot. GAMBLE.

72.—*Michelia champaca.* Champa. A tall evergreen tree. Wood soft, very durable. Used for planking, door-panels, furniture, canoes, native drains. GAMBLE.

73.—*Careya arborea.* Kumbi. A large deciduous tree. Wood moderately hard, durable ; little used, too much neglected. Used for gun-stocks, planking, carts, furniture. Stands well under water. Bark makes good cordage. GAMBLE.

74.—*Hopea parviflora, Bedd.* Kiralabogi. A very handsome tree with small leaves, found in the western moist zone of Malabar and South Kanara, up to 3,500 feet above sea level. When young it has a cone-shaped crown. Wood brown, hard and close-grained, of good quality but little known. Weight about 62 lbs. per cubic foot. It is valued in S. Kanara for building temples, and may be found useful for sleepers. F. B. MANSON.

75.—*Mimusops elengi.* Mulsari or Borsali. A large evergreen. Wood very hard, durable. Wt. about 60 lbs. per cub. ft. Used for building, carts and cabinet work. Makes good fuel. Bark used for native medicine. GAMBLE.

76.—*Planchonia littoralis.* Van Houtte. (=P. valida, Blume) Andaman Baila-Dá. Evergreen. Wood very hard. Weight over 60 lbs. per cubic foot. A valuable wood which should be better known. Seasons well and takes a fine polish. GAMBLE.

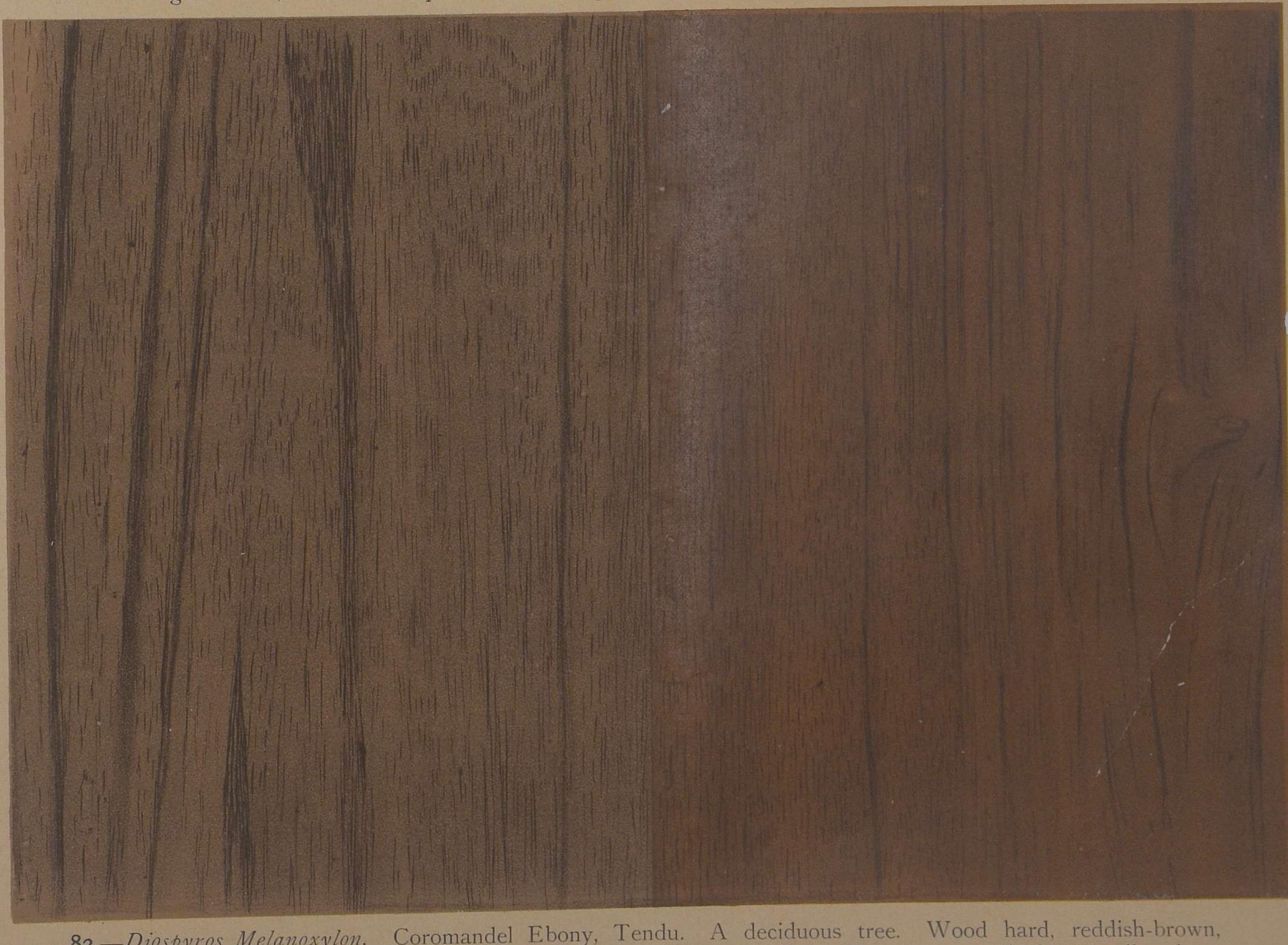
77.—*Berrya ammonilla.* Trincomali wood. Wood very hard, but apt to split. Wt. about 50 lbs. per cub. ft. Used for carts, agricultural implements, spear-handles, boats. GAMBLE.

78.—*Adenanthera pavonina.* A deciduous tree. Wood hard. Weight 55 lbs. per cubic foot. Used for building and cabinet-making. Gives a red dye. GAMBLE.

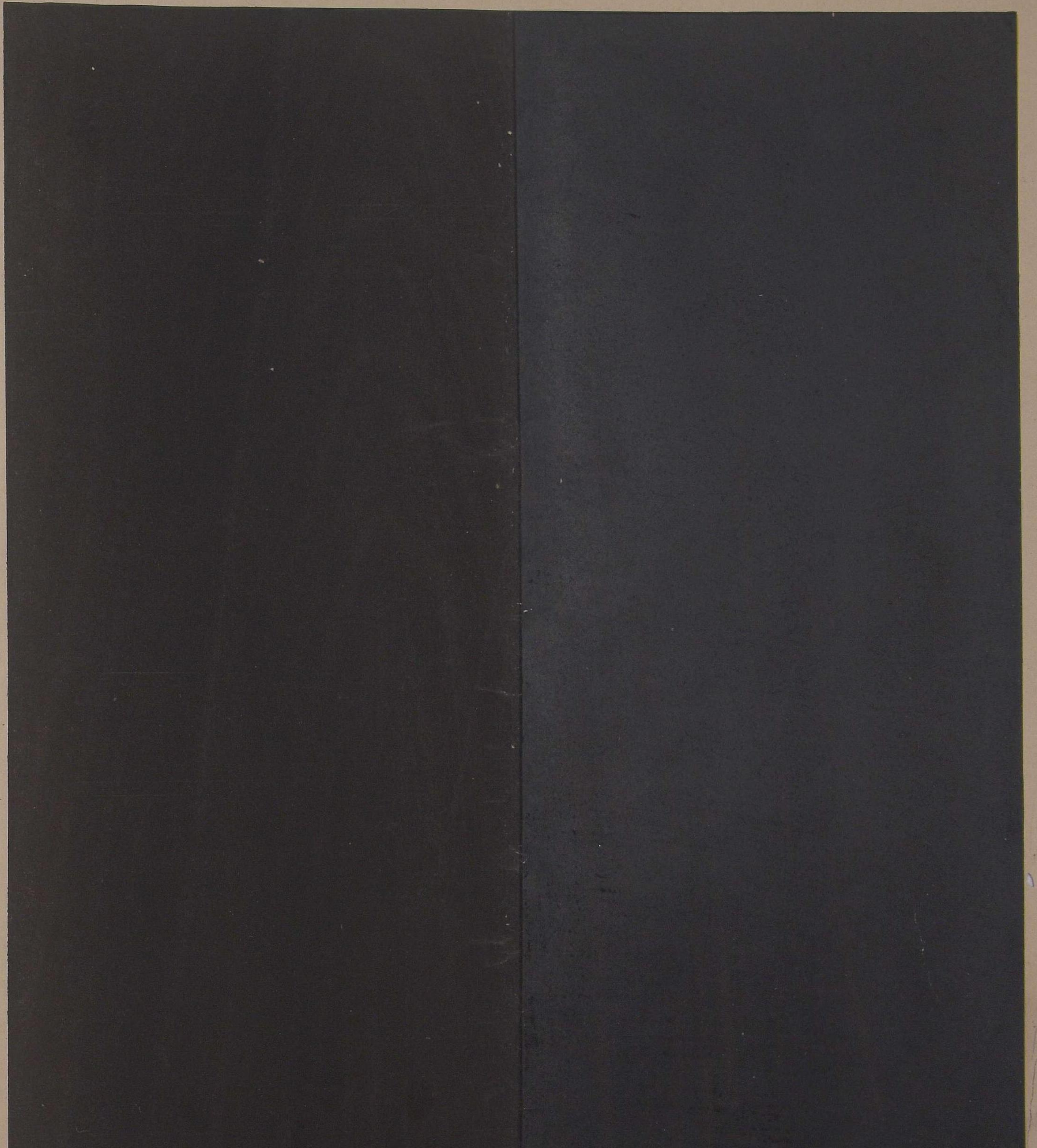
79.—*Xylia dolabriformis.* Ironwood of Pegu. Deciduous. Wood very hard, cross-grained. Wt. 60 lbs. After teak, the most important timber tree of Burma. Used for sleepers, paving-blocks, telegraph poles, boats, agricultural implements, building. GAMBLE.

80.—*Chikrassia tabularis.* Chittagong wood. Wood hard, with satiny lustre. Weight 49 lbs. per cubic foot. Used for furniture. Should be better known. GAMBLE.

81.—*Juglans regia.* Walnut. Large deciduous tree. Wood moderately hard. Wt. 44 lbs. per cub. ft. Used for gun-stocks, furniture, lacquer ware, carvings. GAMBLE.



82.—*Diospyros Melanoxylon.* Coromandel Ebony, Tendu. A deciduous tree. Wood hard, reddish-brown, with an irregular black heart-wood. Weight 75 lbs. per cubic foot. The ebony available is small and not



83.—*Diospyros Ebenum.* Ebony or Balé. A large tree found in the Ghât forests of the Shimoga and Hassan Districts; also plentiful in Ceylon. Wood grey, with irregularly-shaped masses of jet-black ebony near the centre, frequently with lighter-coloured streaks. Weight about 74 lbs. per cubic foot. This is the chief ebony-yielding tree. The wood is exported to England, Germany and China. Used for turnery, cabinet-work, piano-keys, rulers, brush-backs, inlaying, and other ornamental work; in China for chopsticks, pipes, carved vase-stands, etc. GAMBLE.

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